

E 449

. L 895

1858



## HUMAN BEINGS NOT PROPERTY.

SPEECH OF HON. OWEN LOVEJOY,  
OF ILLINOIS.

Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 17, 1858.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before entering upon the consideration of the subject which is to be the principal theme of discussion, I desire to submit a few preliminary remarks as to the real nature of the contest in which we are engaged. To my apprehension, it is greatly desirable that we have a distinct and well-defined understanding of the conflict—for conflict it is—in which we are engaged, of the principles involved, and of the parties arrayed.

It is not, then, let me say, a conflict between the North and the South—a sectional strife between two portions of the country. I deem it unfortunate that the terms North and South are so frequently employed to designate the opposing forces in this contest. What is there to array the North against the South, or the South against the North? Nothing; so far as I can see, absolutely nothing. Is there any competition between the products of these two portions of our common country? Do the maize, wheat, and sorghum, of the North, envy the rice, cotton, and cane, of the South? On the other hand, the territorial extent of our country, the variety of its productions, and the range of its climate, are, if left to their natural operation, elements of strength, union, prosperity, and harmony. This complicated yet concordant unity is happily expressed in language employed for that purpose by one who has passed away:

"Not chaos-like together crushed bruised;  
But like the world harmoniously confused,  
Where order in variety we see;  
And where, though all things differ, all agree."

If there is anything in the land that would destroy or even weaken this mystic, yet potent agency, that binds us together as a Confederacy, and which would hurl us in disjointed fragments into ruin and chaos, let it be brought to the altar of patriotism and slain.

What, then, is the source of this moral

strife, which at times wears an aspect so threatening and terrific? The source of the calamities which befel the Grecians in the Trojan war is recited in the opening lines of the Iliad:

"Achilles's wrath, to Greece the direful spring  
Of woes unnumbered, heavenly goddess, sing."

What Achilles's wrath was to Greece, Slavery is to our own country—the prolific spring of woes unnumbered. Not the discussion, not the agitation of the subject of Slavery, but the existence of Slavery itself. The conflict, then, is not between the North and the South, but between Freedom and Slavery—between the principles of liberty and those of despotism. The free States (I speak it with shame) have advocates of Slavery extension; the slave States (I mention it with joy) have many hearts that are loyal to Freedom, and these liege men will be greatly multiplied ere many years roll away. I venture the prediction. The great mistake has been in identifying the South with Slavery and slaveholding—in using the words as convertible terms. There is a class who advocate the rightfulness, perpetuity, and nationality of Slavery, who seem to think that they are the South. Any attack on Slavery, with its nameless wrongs and pollutions and usurpations, is construed into an assault on the South, and is called sectionalism.

But supposing Slavery were not, would there not still be a South? Would not its rivers flow, its forests wave, and its soil and mines yield their annual and accustomed tribute? What if the class indicated—a class infinitesimal as compared with the population of the entire Union, and numerically insignificant as compared with the whole population of the South—what, I say, if this entire class should be annihilated by a single blow of that slumbering Justice at whose anticipated waking Jefferson trembled; or be found, on some morning,

heaps of slain, like the hosts of Sennacherib, pallid in their couch like the first born of Egypt, or buried like the horsemen of Pharaoh, beneath the avenging wave : would there not still be a South ? What if the earth should open and swallow master and slave together : would there not be a class left, more than equal in numbers to that of both the others, to wit : the non-slaveholders of the slave States, who, if freed from the presence and blight of Slavery, would divide the Territory into small freeholds, and commence a process of recuperation that would ultimately bring back the South to its original position, and make it the pride and glory of the whole land ? Or—what is really desirable, and contemplating the only peaceful and bloodless and just exodus which I can see for the slave, and the only proper cessation of this conflict—supposing the present dominant class in the slave States, looking at this subject in the light of history, in the light of the inevitable workings and final triumphs of free principles, elevating themselves above the political expedients and shifts of a day, and taking broad, humane, and patriotic views of this subject, should, by some wise process, rid themselves of this malignant system : would there not still be a South—a South jubilant, a country joyous, a world glad, and Heaven itself clothed in benignant smiles of approbation ?

Then would be fulfilled that Divine injunction graven on the bell that used, in olden times, to summon the fathers to their deliberations in Independence Hall—"Proclaim liberty throughout the land, to all the inhabitants thereof."

What an opportunity is here presented to the true heroic men of the South—an opportunity that never occurs but once during the lifetime of an individual, and but seldom in the cycles of generations ! Oh, that thou hadst known, at least at this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace and true glory ! I pray God that they may not be hidden from your eyes. The first Revolution found a leader from the South. The hosts of Freedom, now marshalled in grand and goodly array, having passed their Bunker Hill, ask the South for a leader to take them to Saratoga and

Yorktown. Have you the man—the hero ? If so, let him ride forth, and you shall see whether we are a sectional party or not.

Opportunity rare ! Have any of you a heart to improve it ? Would you have your sculptured form fill some niche which is now vacant in these new Halls, or perpetuated on canvas and hung up amid the illustrious dead that now ornament the rotunda ? Seize, then, this opportunity ; forswear allegiance to Slavery, and take the oath of fealty to Freedom. You can gain no permanent renown in fighting for oppression ; or, if you achieve fame, it will be like that of the madman who applied the torch to the temple of Ephesus—a bad pre-eminence. Some of you have the mental gifts and culture and position to achieve a fame that should be permanent and enviable. Have you the moral heroism to do it ?

"Fear not ; spurn the worldling's laughter,  
Thine ambition trample thou ;  
Thou shalt find a long hereafter  
To be more than tempts thee now."

Let us, then, hear nothing more of North and South. We make no assault on the rights of the South ; it is the wrongs and aggressions of Slavery with which we grapple. The South, the citizens of the South, have all the rights, privileges, and immunities, of the citizens of the North or West. Let those rights be guarantied and protected, anywhere and everywhere, "to the fullest extent—to the fullest extent, sir."

The King of France, Louis XIV, in view of the union of that country and Spain, said, "there are no longer any Pyrenees." And I say, let there be no longer any Mason and Dixon's line ; let it disappear, and let the country be one united whole ; the rights of all equally respected, equally sacred.

But, as to Slavery, that is a different thing. Whatever legal sanction it may have, under municipal statutes, it has no constitutional sanction, save the negative one of being let alone ; while it skulks under and behind the sovereignty of the States, beyond the reach of the delegated powers of the Federal Government. But where that Government has exclusive jurisdiction, it has no right ; and it has no moral right anywhere, and

no suitable abode out of those penal fires that are never quenched. It is a very Caliban.

"*Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum.*"

And this brings me, sir, to the question which I desire to discuss—the question not only of the day, but of the age—the most important question that has agitated the country since the Revolution, and the most solemn and grave one with which Christian civilization has had to grapple in modern times.

The President, in his message, claims, or rather assumes, that human beings are property in the absolute and unqualified sense—property, as the grazing ox or the bale of merchandise is property; and that the tenure of this property is a natural and indefeasible right, guarantied by the Constitution. And it has been averred on the floor of this House, that, as an abstract principle, the system of American Slavery was right, having the sanction of natural and of revealed religion. As the whole of this discussion, in its real merits, hinges on this principle or dogma, I confront it at the very threshold, and deny it. I affirm that it has not the sanction of natural or revealed religion, or of the Constitution.

I need not say that this is a new doctrine, unknown to the fathers and founders of the Republic. Indeed, till within a very few years, Slavery was acknowledged by all classes, in the slave no less than in the free States, to be an evil, social, moral, and political—a wrong to the slave, a detriment to the master, and a blight on the soil; its very existence deplored, and its ultimate extermination looked forward to with earnest and often impatient hope. It was regarded as the relic of a barbarous age, which must disappear before the advancing civilization of the present. It was deemed to be contrary to the benign spirit and precepts of the Christian religion, which would ere long supplant it. Many of its ablest and truest opponents were reared in the midst of it, and could be called neither intermeddlers nor fanatics. No one pretended that it had any right whatever beyond the limits of the local laws which created and protected it.

But all this is changed now. The demon of Slavery has come forth from the tombs. It has grown bold, and defiant, and impudent. It has left its lair, lifted its shameless front towards the skies, and, with horrid contortions and gyrations, mouths the heavens, and mutters its blasphemies about having the sanction of a holy and just God; dodges behind the national compact, and grins and chatters out its senile puerilities about constitutional sanction; and then, like a very fantastic ape, jumps upon the bench, puts on crime and wig, and pronounces the dictum that a certain class of human beings have no rights which another class are bound to regard; and then it claims the right to stalk abroad through the length and breadth of the land, robbing the poor free laborer of his heritage, trampling on Congressional prohibitions, crushing out beneath its tread State sovereignty and State Constitutions. It claims the right to pollute the Territories with its slimy footsteps, and then makes its way to the very home of Freedom in the free States, carried there on a constitutional palanquin, manufactured and borne aloft on the one side by a Democratic Executive, and on the other by a Democratic Jesuit Judge! It claims the right to annihilate free schools—for this its very presence achieves—to hamper a free press, to defile the pulpit, to corrupt religion, and to stifle free thought and free speech! It claims the right to convert the fruitful field into a wilderness, so that forests shall grow up around graveyards, and the populous village become a habitation for owls. It claims the right to transform the free laborer, by a process of imperceptible degradation, to a condition only not worse than that of the slave. Yes, sir, while the border ruffians are striving, by alternate violence and fraud, to force Slavery into Kansas, the President and Chief Justice, by new, unheard of, and most unwarrantable interpretations of the Constitution, are endeavoring to enthrone and nationalize Slavery, and make it the dominant power in the land; and are calling upon the people, in the name of Democracy, to crowd up to the temple gates of this demon worship! And all this upon the false, atrocious, and impious averment,

that human beings are property! Again I meet this doctrine, and spurn it. The Supreme Being never intended that human beings should be property.

In those far-off solitudes of the past, when that sublime manifestation of Almighty power was to be made in the formation of a human being, what was the utterance that fell from the Divine lips? "And God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness; and in the image of God created he him." Made but little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor, there stood man, the delegated lord and possessor of the earth, and of all the irrational existence with which it teemed. This similitude of man to God is a reality. There is, in man's spiritual nature, a miniature God—debased this likeness may be, disfigured and dim, still there is the Divine tracery. The pearl may be in the oozy bed of ocean's slime; still it is capable of being burnished and made to glisten in the firmament of a future and immortal life.

When a monarch confides his signet ring to another, though that other be a beggar, that symbol carries with it the power and protection of royalty. And on whatever being the Divine artist has traced the image of himself, I insist that that being cannot, without wrong and impiety, be made an article of property. This spiritual existence with which man is endowed—this transcript of the Creator's likeness—is not a temporary endowment, but an endless gift.

"The sun is but a spark of fire,  
A transient meteor in the sky;  
The soul, immortal as its Sire,  
Shall never die."

Shall a being, thus highly endowed, and destined to an endless duration, be crowded down to the level of the brutes that perish? Does any one believe that it is in accordance with the Divine will?

As from the altitude of the stars, all inequalities of earth's surface disappear, so from the stand-point of man's immortality all distinctions fade away, and every human being stands on the broad level of equality. To chattelize a rational creature, thus endowed and thus allied, is to insult and incense the author of his being.

Look at it from another point. Eigh-

teen centuries ago appeared the most wonderful personage that has ever moved among men—the God-man—the Deity manifested in human form. After a life of chosen poverty, passed amid the poor and the lowly, he laid down his life to expiate the sins of man. President Buchanan, believest thou the gospel record? I know that thou believest. Tell me, then, sir, did Christ shed his blood for cattle? Did he lay down his life to replenish personal property, to redeem real estate? I tell you, gentlemen, that this property claim in man is impiety, rank and foul, against God and his anointed.

"Eternal Nature! when thy giant hand  
Had heaved the floods, and fixed the trembling  
land—

When life sprang startled at thy plastic call,  
Endless her forms, and man the lord of all—  
Say, was that lordly form inspired by thee  
To wear eternal chains and bow the knee?  
Was man ordained the slave of man to toil,  
Yoked with the brutes, and fettered to the soil,  
Weighed in a tyrant's balance with his gold?  
No! nature stamped us in a heavenly mould.  
She bade no wretch his thankless labors urge,  
Nor trembling take his pittance and the  
scourge;

No homeless Lybian on the stormy deep,  
To call upon his native land and weep."

I adopt, with cordial admiration, the language of one of England's greatest statesmen:

"While mankind loathe rapine, detest fraud, and abhor blood, they will reject with indignation the wild and guilty fantasy that man can hold property in man."

In our preamble to the resolutions inviting clergymen to officiate as chaplains, we have avowed our belief in Christianity. One of the divinest utterances of that religion is: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." The President, in his recent message, justly says that the avowed principle which lies at the foundation of the laws of nations is contained in this Divine precept.

Take one single feature of Slavery: it annihilates the family; it tolerates no home; it tears with relentless diabolism its plowshare beam deep right through God's domestic institution; and, having levelled it with the dust, rears the devil's domestic institution, and transforms the home, the house, into a stable, and its inmates into cattle. The relation of husband and wife, of parent and child, and the endearments of the home circle,

are not and cannot be legally known among the victims of Slavery.

What a contrast between that family portrayed in the *Cotter's Saturday Night*—though they were in the depths of poverty, though they had been out to service during the week; what a contrast between that rude home and the best slave dwelling! From one springs a country's glory and greatness; from the other, a country's decay, shame, and disgrace.

Take away what there is of earthly happiness growing out of the endearments of home, and how much of human felicity have you left? I look around me, and see scores of men, many of whom have, in homes more or less distant, those dearer than life. Can any one prove to you, gentlemen, by any course of reasoning, that it would be right, under any possible circumstances, to doom those children to the auction-block, to be sold like cattle? If I can prove that it is right to take and chattelize another man's children, then he can prove it is right to do the same with mine. Make it right, as an abstract principle, to enslave one human being, and you have broken down the barriers that protect every other human being.

I come now to the constitutional question. The limits that I have assigned myself will not allow a full or even an extended discussion of this point. The President contents himself with declaring, in general terms, that the Constitution regards slaves as property, and adds that this has at last been settled by the highest judicial authority in the land. The Chief Justice, who, according to the Executive, has settled this question, also alludes in a general way to the Constitution, and bases his dictum on contemporaneous history and sentiment, rather than upon anything found in that instrument. Both these gentlemen profess to be strict constructionists of the Constitution. Now, I beg to ask them upon what portion of the Constitution they rely for the support of this property dogma? They say it is in the Constitution. I say it is not in the Constitution; and in the absence of all proof, my say is as good as theirs. In no article, in no section, in no line, word, or syllable, or letter, is the idea of prop-

erty in man expressed or implied. It is a mystery to me how any man could ever believe it; and it is a double mystery to me how an utterance so absolutely untrue, and so slanderous towards the framers of the Constitution, could be thrust before the American people from the Supreme Judiciary, and receive the sanction of the Chief Magistrate. An ancient Roman prince said, that if truth should be driven from every other place, it ought to find a home in the hearts of rulers.

We have fallen upon evil times, when a Chief Justice and a Chief Magistrate deliberately and officially utter what, seemingly, they must know to be untrue. Terrible are the necessities and exactions of Slavery! How can these gentlemen help knowing that these declarations are untrue? Do they not contradict the entire history of the country? Do they not contradict the repeated declarations of Madison on this very point? Has he not averred, over and over again, that the idea of property was carefully kept out of the Constitution, so that when Slavery should cease to exist in the States, there would be no evidence in that instrument that it had ever existed at all? And now this instrument, so instinct with the spirit of Freedom, so abhorring the idea of property in man, that it would not be polluted with the word slave, slavery, or servitude even, this Constitution is assumed, by its own inherent force, without any express law or legislative sanction whatever, to carry human chattelism into the Territory of Kansas, and if into the Territory of Kansas, into the *State* of Kansas; for what right has Kansas, or any other State, to adopt a Constitution that contradicts or invalidates the Constitution of the United States? If the slave-owner holds his slave in Kansas by a tenure derived from the Constitution, I would like to know what power can take it away? If a new State forms a Constitution with a clause prohibiting Slavery, and comes and asks admission into the Union with such an organic law, it must be sent back with a mandate to strike out the prohibitory clause, as being contrary to the Federal Constitution. This has at last been settled by the highest judicial tribunal in the land.

And it is a mystery to President Buchanan how any one ever could doubt it. Under this doctrine, carried to its logical results, no more free States could ever be added to the Union. *Proh pudor!* To this complexion it must come at last. To this complexion it has come already. The question now is, whether the country shall be the home of Freedom or the lair of Slavery; whether the despotism of the fetter and the scourge shall wield the sceptre, and Liberty be driven into exile.

But still farther as to this property principle. If human beings are property, as is now claimed, why has Federal legislation declared the slave trade piracy? Is it piracy to go to the coast of Africa and trade in elephants' teeth, or in palm oil, or in any other article of commerce that may be produced there? If this property claim is correct, then this law is unjust, and ought to be repealed, unless it is to be considered in the light of a protective tariff, to encourage and promote slave breeding at home.

More than this: how often is it that when slave-owners lie down upon the death couch, and look the future in the face, they emancipate their slaves? How often do they do it as a reward for some heroic achievement? Did you ever hear of men emancipating their cattle in their last will and testament? Do they ever bequeath freedom to their swine? or extend that precious boon to a Newfoundland dog that had rescued a child from a watery grave?

Besides, to whom belong all the stray cattle that are without owners in this country? There is certainly a goodly herd of them. How many millions of dollars worth I have not the means at hand of estimating accurately. Perhaps, at the instance of the President, the Chief Justice would enter up a judgment against them, and enter a *capias*. They have no rights that are to be regarded. They are property, and all property ought to have an owner. They would bring a goodly sum, hard as are the times, enough to go far towards carrying Pennsylvania for a second term. But I meant to be serious, and I will.

I have no patience with these abhorrent assumptions, for I cannot call them

arguments, which claim property in man. Such claims are an insult to the intelligence, the Christianity, and the civilization of the age.

I have a final objection to urge against Slavery, and much more against its expansion. It lies across our country's glory and destiny.

Century after century rolled over the world—nay, whole decades of centuries wore wearily away in earth's history—and the dogma gained universal prevalence and belief, that kings ruled by right divine. *Dei gratia rex* was engraven on their coin. This dogma was, by education, incorporated in the common faith, and acquired all the strength of a religious principle, and all the ardor of a devotional sentiment.

I hardly need recite the unhappy results that flowed to mankind from the prevalence of this dogma. Monarchs wielded a sceptre of iron. The masses were deemed of no value, only as they could minister to the lust, power, or ambition, of the ruling class. The Government was not made for them, but they for the Government. Their blood saturated the soil, and their bones enriched it. They had no rights that kings were bound to regard. But the recital of the woes and wrongs inflicted and endured under the supremacy of this notion of the Divine right of kings would be an illimitable story—it would indeed be the history of the human race during the cycles of ages that they have inhabited the globe. Heaven and earth became alike weary of this state of things. The period arrived when the Great Ruler would introduce a new theory of government. The curtain was to roll up, and exhibit a new act in the earth's drama. America was the theatre where this manifestation was to be made. The old Pilgrim barks, borne as by a miracle over the angry ocean, came freighted with the elements of a new political life, and the germ of a new national organization. How they planted themselves at Jamestown and Plymouth, you know. How they struggled on in their colonial dependence, against forest and savage, and British aggressions, you need not be told.

Then came the crisis of our fate! Our ancestors, Cavalier and Roundhead,



and I bless their memory, met that crisis manfully, heroically. They came to the Revolution, and on its threshold it was that God poured that wonderful illumination over the mind of Jefferson, and inspired the utterance of those everlasting truths. How grandly majestic they come rolling down from the past, baptized in the blood that flowed from patriotic hearts! "We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This principle laid the axe at the root of the old and long-dominant dogma, that one man, or race of men, was created to be kings or nobles, and another to be perpetual peasants and serfs. It placed them upon the broad level of absolute equality, so far as natural rights were concerned. It does not say all British subjects born on this side of the ocean are equal to those born on the other side of it; it does not say that all *English* men are born equal, or all *French* men, or all *Scotch* men, or all *Dutch* men, or all *white* men, or all *tawny* men, or all *black* men, but ALL MEN. That every human being endowed with a rational existence, created in the image of his God, was equally entitled to life and liberty. It is on this principle that criminal jurisprudence rests. The law in its divine impartiality exacts the life of the murderer, whatever his position, for that of his victim. Whatever may have been the intellectual endowments of the homicide, however exalted his social position, he must pay the forfeit of his life for slaying the most abject and idiotic of his species. And why? Because the life of the poor and debased victim was as sacred and inviolable as that of his gifted and exalted slayer. The one was equally entitled to his life as the other. So precisely with regard to Liberty: to *that*, every human being is equally entitled.

To protect these rights, Governments are instituted among men. Not to bestow rights are Governments instituted among men, but to *protect* those which God has already given, antecedent to all organic forms of government. I do not depend upon Parliaments, or Kings, or

Congresses, or majorities, for my rights. I hold them direct from the Creator who formed me. So does every human being. The man, or body of men, who take away these rights, without the forms of law, or with the forms of law, unless forfeited by crime, are despots, tyrants, and usurpers, and by the very act forfeit their own.

If a man is robbed of these rights, it makes no difference whether it is done by one man called a king, or by many men called a majority. I do not subscribe to that translucent phantom of popular sovereignty, when it claims the right to enslave men. In a company of a hundred men, have ninety-nine the right to rob the hundredth, provided even it is submitted to them, and they have a fair election? A majority of a hundred men, of which I am one, may have the right to make the rules which shall operate alike upon us all. But when they come to commend an embittered chalice to my lip, of which they will not themselves partake, then I say they have no right to do it—it is wrong.

If the people of a Territory or of a State will vote that they themselves and their children shall alike be slaves, I am content. But that a majority have the rightful power to take away the natural rights of any one single human being, I deny. Those rights, I repeat, are given and guarded by the common Father of us all. And as the parental instincts go forth, with peculiar energy and jealousy, towards the unfortunate and less favored member of the family circle, protecting his interests and avenging his wrongs, so the Divine Parent watches with peculiar vigilance over the rights of the weak and hapless ones of earth, and avenges their injuries with a terrible and unusual retribution. Did it never occur to you, gentlemen, that as with the individual, so with the nation? Power, elevation, rare endowment, instead of conferring privilege and prerogative, impose obligation. The All-Wise and All-Powerful is the All-Good as well; and it is His goodness that claims our adoration. And that one expression which we have been taught to lisp in childhood, and to utter in the strength of years—"Our Father"—is



0 011 899 441 3

harta of human brother-  
man equality before God  
and before the law.

What now is our country's duty, destiny, and true glory? To go marauding over the territories of weaker nations, like buccaneers and poltroons, to extend the area of Slavery; to hunt down fugitive slaves, and take them back, manacled, to bondage; to break down the dykes of Freedom, and let the dark and en-anguined waters of Slavery rush in a destructive flood over the land? No! In the name of the fathers, in the name of the Constitution, in the name of the Declaration, in the name of our dignity and position, and in the name of God—no! The true mission of this nation, the work assigned, the trust committed, is to reduce to organic form as we have already done, and now to illustrate before the world, the great and ever-enduring truths that I have recited, and thus to exemplify before the nations of the earth the principles of civil and religious Freedom and Equality, and so teach them that their monarchies and despotisms are usurpations. I never read that Declaration but with new admiration and delight. So comprehensive, yet so full! Embracing the entire Divine theory of human government in a single paragraph! All men, endowed by their Creator with an equal title to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness! Governments instituted among men to secure these rights, deriving all their just powers from the consent of the governed!

We hear about keeping step to the music of the Union. Sir, go build a huge organ on the shelving sides of the Rocky Mountains, and let the angel of Liberty strike its keys and chant forth that sublime and grand old anthem of Universal Freedom; and then, as its notes roll over the land, solemn and majestic, in God's name, sir, I will keep step to the music of the Union. It is a divine symphony. But when you call upon me to keep step to the sound of clanking chains and of human manacles, to the wild shriek of human agony and suffering, I cannot do it. It grates upon me like the very dissonance of hell. I cannot keep step to such music.

And now, sir, why do we stand thus proudly pre-eminent among the nations of the earth? Why has this nation been led to a position so grand and enviable? Is it because God is any respecter of persons or of nations? Not that; but because He has a grand work for us to do—to lead the world to freedom and glory; to the conscious possession and unmolested enjoyment of rights divinely given. And why should we abandon this position? Why are we called upon to betray the high and solemn trusts committed to our care by the Most High? Why are we asked to wheel around from the van in the progress of a Christian civilization, and with muffled drum and drooping colors march back a decade of centuries into the darkness and barbarism of the past? Why should we, by our refusal to fulfil the destiny plainly marked out for us by the finger of God, yield the honor of earth's renovation to some other people? What is to reward us for all this shame, loss of position, and recreancy to Heaven-confided trusts? Will the clank of human fetters on the plains of Kansas, and the wail of man's despair on the Pacific shore, compensate us for this sacrifice?

Oh, how much more noble and heroic for those who have it in their power to say, in God's name this evil must be removed. What a future then flashes on our country! In those ages to come, by a natural process of assimilation and peaceful expansion, we should conquer and possess the entire continent. The genius of Freedom, on some lofty peak of the Rocky Mountains or the Andes, should look abroad, northward and southward, eastward and westward, and behold one vast ocean of Republics, bound together by the federal compact,

"Distinct like the billows, yet one like the sea."

And as the recording angel dropped a tear of sorrow on the good man's oath, and blotted it out forever; so the genius of History, when she came to trace our record, would drop a tear of regret, and blot out the fact that Slavery ever existed. With this result in view, the Constitution was formed.

Shades of the departed, hovering around this Hall, I bless your memories for that CONSTITUTION.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 899 441 3



permalife®  
pH 8.5